



The Activist Files Podcast Episode 22:  
Restitution and repair - a discussion on Black reparations  
with Dr. Ron Daniels and Marbre Stahly-Butts

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Donita:

Welcome to The Activist Files. My name is Donita Judge and I am the Associate Executive Director at the Center for Constitutional Rights. I am joined today by Dr. Ron Daniels, President of the National African American Reparations Commission and past Executive Director of the Center for Constitutional Rights and Marbre Stahly-Butts, Executive Director of Law for Black Lives and a member of the leadership team of The Movement for Black Lives policy table and help develop the vision for black lives policy platform. The Center for Constitutional Rights hosted a discussion about reparations for blacks in October when our organization made a public commitment to reparations for black people. Today's podcast discussion is another layer of our commitment. So, let's get started. Both of your organizations have rolled out multipoint platforms for reparations for blacks starting with Ron, can you give our listeners a high-level overview of the demands?

Ron:

Well, first of all, it's an honor to be here and to be a part of this podcast and to be with Mayberry [sic] - Marbre, I always get that - you know-

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Marbre: We're even now. [Laughs]

Ron: Yeah, right. But first of all, let me just say that I'm President of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century, which is the convener of the National African-American Reparations Commission and NARC, as it is known, has a 10-point program and that 10-point program which can be found by the way on the website, [ibw21.org](http://ibw21.org). [Ibw21.Org](http://Ibw21.Org) has 10-points and those 10-points really mirror the work, the platform of the CARICOM Reparations Commission. People should be aware that about three or four years ago, the 15 nations of the Caribbean, all of the heads of state, irrespective of their political perspectives, made a courageous demand for reparations of the former colonial powers for native genocide and African enslavement.

Ron: And they decreed that there should be a CARICOM reparations commission and that it should have a program and it developed a 10-point program, their commissions throughout the Caribbean. And let me to say that it's headed, the chairperson of that commission, is Professor, Sir Hilary Beckles, who is now currently also the President of the University of the West Indies. So we worked with them and use that as a framework. So our platform has a couple of, I think, salient features, one of which is - deals with the question of how reparations would be administered. And so we provide for what's called a reparations finance authority. Because a lot of people say, well, what about reparations? Who's going to get it? Who's going to be in charge? Well, we've dealt with a structure for doing that. Now this structure would be - consist of people who are credible from all sectors, a representative sector of people who would be charged for receiving various forms of reparations and also allocating them.

Ron: In terms of the specific points and platform, it ranges from the right to return to Africa, a right to return with

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reparations; a knowledge program, because frankly one of the injuries that has happened to us as black people is we have amnesia. Our memory of ourselves has been taken away. So there's a knowledge program that's provided for it. There's a notion of a Maafa or a reparations museum which would then, you know, look at what the enslavement look like both in terms of the transatlantic slave trade, but the institution of the so-called peculiar institution in this country. But also then economic development. You know, how do we do economic development? Education. One of the things that we included is even though our Native American brothers and sisters have not achieved full repair after the Trail of Tears that went on for years and years and years, they eventually did get sovereignty quasi-sovereignty over the land.

Ron:

So if you go to a Native American reservation, they have 95% control of what happens on the land. So we're saying there's vast public lands, why are African Americans not be awarded tracks of public land? So that we then could do on those lands what we choose to do, hospitals, educational centers, communication centers, whatever you name it. So it goes down the line. Economic development, education, communications, health. Health. A big emphasis on how do we be, because for many years there were actually hospitals and in black communities all across the country that were devastated, that were eventually taken away. And then finally there's also a discussion about the war on drugs and the whole question of political prisoners and prisoners of war because we want those who have been harmed, who were fighting in the liberation struggle, you know, they need to be repaired. The families need to be made whole, the communities in which they come from made whole.

Ron:

So that's a broad overview. It's in more detail than that, but the idea is an overarching set of 10 points that would help to repair the cultural, economic,

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spiritual damages done to people of African descent in this country.

Donita: Thank you very much Dr. Daniels, and certainly we agree it's important. Education is certainly one of the important tools. I like to turn to Marbre at this point and ask you really to respond to the same question in terms of the multi-platform that you've been working on.

Marbre: Thank you so much. And I just want to also extend gratitude to the amazing work of CCR and it's a pleasure and an honor to be here and with Dr. Ron Daniels so thank you both so, so much. So I think I want to just start with, so as you mentioned, the movement for black lives about five years ago now released a vision for black lives platform, which was the culmination of over a year and a half of love and labor, with over 60 organizations across the country.

Marbre: And it was meant not just to be in response to the escalation and the killing of black folks across the country by police and other law enforcement officials. But it was also meant to be a visioning document. So to name not just what we would settle for, not just what we needed to survive, but also what was necessary to thrive. And so it was a political exercise in deep visioning and dreaming. And one of the planks of that platform is defamation.

Marbre: And so it goes into detail, much of which Dr. Daniels already laid out of the full kind of, spectrum of reparations for slavery first and foremost of course, but also beyond slavery. I think the rationale is that by limiting ourselves to demands just around slavery, that we really erase the continued exploitation of black communities through structural discrimination and systemic exclusion. Right? And so that is everything from redlining, Jim Crow convict leasing, the war on drugs that we see from the beginning of slavery through today, continuing harms that are systemic

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against black communities that have to be repaired. And so any demands, for reparations has to include both this kind of original sin of slavery upon which our economy has been built, but also must include the kind of badges and incidents that followed that and continuing ways in which this country, States, corporations, institutions are profiting off of and harming black lives across the country. And so before I get into kind of all the details, I want to also just define reparations.

Marbre:

I think one thing as reparations has been more popularized in the last few years and due to the work of decades of work by organizations like NOC, like MXGM and others, there has been a real popularization of reparations but with that I think has come a continued misunderstanding of what they are. And so I think everything from reparations is just a check to forty acres and a mule, that those are pieces of a demand but actually there's a longstanding definition of reparations that has been presented by the United Nations and adhere to by countries and States and assets across the globe. And so that has five components and I'm going to name those because I think all of our demands - it's easier to understand the full range of the demand and understand that it does not just include money for harm, but also includes these other components. So, number one is actually a guarantee of non petition that that means changing laws, changing policies, changing practices, destroying institutions, sometimes, that will lead to the continuation of those harms. Right. And I think this is important because very often we think about reparations as being just money cut. But it may be that the harms that underlie that are continued via policy and so this against you have non the petition is really important. That's number one. Number two is restitution to the return of the pre-harm situation. So what was the situation either illegally, culturally, socially, geographically, that you were in before the harm was committed and how do we put people back

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in that position? And I think when that's not possible, which isn't always possible, then it's a guarantee of compensation to get you as close to that position as possible. Number three is compensation. So we think about this kind of traditionally negotiations, but it means paying folks for the harm that's been done to the extent that you can, financially assess the damages. So we think about - it is almost unimaginable to think about all the damages caused by slavery, against not just black individuals for the labor, but the families that were destroyed.

Marbre:

More than half of our families were separated under chattel slavery? And so what is the financial cost of that is almost immeasurable. But thinking to the best of our ability to really assess that and to compensate folks for that. Number four, satisfaction. This often includes an apology but it's really accounting for all of the types of damages, reputational, emotional, physical damages and really doing some type of way to satisfy those harms. Be it an apology be it an acknowledgement be it an assessment. And then lastly, and this is really important is rehabilitation and that means medical, psychological, emotional, physical, all of the ways in which these institutions have harmed our people. How do we get to rehabilitate them for those harms. And so lay that out. And again this is a UN definition that's widely accepted, but to say that when we seek reparations for slavery, we don't just mean a check.

Marbre:

We mean cause there was intergenerational trauma that has resulted from slavery. There are countless other emotional, physical, cultural, spiritual theft of long-standing traditions of people of African descent that also have to be tended to in a reparations package. And so when The Vision for Black Lives optimize calls for relations for slavery, we don't just need the labor that was stolen under slavery or the genocide of people in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. We also mean all of the families that were separated,

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all the spiritual practices that were stolen and erased at all of the physical and emotional trauma that has been inherited through generations. So that means investing in cultural centers, that means investing in free rotations of those practices and [inaudible] beyond the check. And so in addition to reparations for slavery, we also demand reparations for the War on Drugs. So in a similar vein, understanding that it's one of the badges and the aftermath of slavery is the prison industrial complex that's targeted black folks for at least the last 40 years, if not longer.

Marbre:

And resulted in literally hundreds of thousands of people in cages and families destroyed yet again, not to mention the other consequences of criminalization from loss of housing to exclusion from the job market and so on and so forth. We also name the miseducation of black folks in this country and the lack of educational opportunities provided as a result of the badges of slavery. And so reparations for decades and generations of miseducation and mal-education that's happened. We also specifically, this is really important in both [inaudible] black lives take a black queer feminist lens to much of the work that we do and so we also want to name and acknowledge the longstanding impacts on black women and black queer folks and a black TNC folks especially through exploitation and reproductive labor of black women. And so we know for instance that actually the transatlantic slave trade was abolished in 1808 and it is through the rape and the forced reproduction of black women that this slave trade continued in this country for decades after that.

Marbre:

And so what does it mean to actually compensate, to think about, to examine and assess the harms on black women's bodies that folks underwent. And the last thing, the other important lens is that of disability justice, that many of these policies from slavery to the masculinization and mass incarceration of black people to red lining have disproportionately impacted people

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with disabilities. And so what does it mean to also lift up folks with disabilities and ask questions about how in fact these practices ultimately cause more disabilities, but it also led to the [inaudible].

Ron:

Thank you for that. As I listened to you, I recognize that there are some overlaps for the demands for reparations. Marbre, you did talk about really the exploitation, certainly of black women's bodies and you have actually focused, not you, but the movement for black lives really specifically calls out reparations of the African descent and past and current oppression of economic and reproductive labor of queer, trans gender nonconforming and the disabled people as you mentioned. Can you just kind of expand on that just a bit more?

Marbre:

Yeah, so I think as I mentioned, briefly during the actual slave trade, one of the key components that allowed the continuation and explanation of black labor was the notion of lack of children by black women and GNC folks and queer folks. And so the reality is that it was black women's bodies that we'll use to perpetuate slavery throughout this country often via rape, almost always via coercion. And this was kind of just as literally as I said, half of all black families were divided during slavery. And so not only were black women and black GNC folks forced to reproduce, often raped, but then were forced to separate from the children and families. They often we think about slavery as labor exploitation, which it surely was, but then it's really important to name and to assess the full dynamics, holistic costs of slavery on black communities. And part of that was the way in which patriarchy and misogyny played into an exacerbated slavery and the costs and the harms of slavery for black woman and GNC folks. You know, it's not that we don't know that, like that's the science. We all understand that reproduction is a key part of slavery. But I think we don't need that as part of the violence and the crime of slavery very often.

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Ron: One of the things that too, frankly, just in terms of this conversation, why reparations is important. It is first and foremost important to African-Americans because it's an education about ourselves. And I think the lens that a movement for black lives is bringing to it. First of all it's true, but I think it will resonate because a lot of this is history that we don't want to talk about. It's been buried and some people don't know all of this story. So in a way, as we're educating people around reparations, we're reminding ourselves of what happened to us and why it is only healthy for us to resist. It is only healthy for us to make these demands and Professor Sir Hilary Beckles makes this point all the time and Dr [inaudible] was on like a mission they say. If we did nothing. I mean demand in and of itself is reparative to us as a part of our healing process.

Ron: So I wanted to sort of emphasize that point because when we do this work, very often that is not examined as much as it should be. I also just like to reinforce the reality that we're not just talking about enslavement though. We have Dr. Patricia Newton, CEO of the black psychiatrists of Americans who is on our commission, I mean people are now looking at the scientific evidence of the inner generational driving of that trauma into our DNA so that some of the behavior that we see in some of the things that we do is now, I forget the terms that they use and I'm, I'm listening. I just came from a session, so I've got to master the terminology, but this is serious damage that we've been experiencing. So I just want to cite that. But also for folks to understand, Claude Anderson in his book, Black Labor, White Wealth talks about this, that Jim Crow laws that we were deprived of a lot of things.

Ron: Martin Luther King, by the way, people should study a part of what he talked about. And then he, he didn't say reparations per se, but he outlined the homestead act. White farmers and this was a safety valve in a way. I mean he goes, there was serious tensions in this

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capitalist society. So the homestead act was kind of a safety valve and the Homestake act by the way in the West provided's huge tracks of land for farmers, but it also, the railroads and the capitalist also benefited from it, but who did not benefit it and who was excluded from it? Well, black people and then you have the FHA, that created the suburbs and gave people that whole notion of a house in a home and so forth. Black people excluded. The GI bill. In the South, agricultural extension agents that provided services and help white farmers while black folks were denied. See all of these things where there's an exclusive targeted denial of black folks are subject to reparations.

Marbre:

And just to build on that too. I think it's so powerful to look at history and name of all of the differences that make up exclusions, [inaudible] harms. That those things build upon each other at every juncture to increase disparities in wealth, increases disparities in health rates. Like it is true [inaudible] that black women die here in New York City at 18 times the rate doing giving birth as white women. And that is a result of that accumulation of harms, of stress, of trauma. And as I think that reparations have to account for and assess the sum of those parts when thinking about what actually a comprehensive package might look like.

Donita:

Thank you. You know, we've heard a lot this year about HR 40 and we know that Representative Conyers was really the architect behind that legislation. It was reintroduced for many, many years. But you've said earlier today that the legislation has shifted a bit. Can you talk about HR 40 where it was, where it is now and -

Ron:

Right. And let me just say this because it's also important to name some of the unsung heroes and heroines sometimes that are involved in this. So John Conyers, Congressman Conyers, he was a dear friend

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of mine, was in his district in Detroit. He didn't come up with the idea of doing this. There were people in the community who kept coming to him saying, well, why don't you take on reparations? And particularly a gentleman whose name was Reparation Ray Jenkins, and I just want to say his name because you know, he kept hammering and hammering. And fortunately, there was a conscious community that the Congressman Conyers was associated with that said, let's do this. And it occurred at the time when there was an immediate precedent and that was the awarding of the reparations, which should have been done.

Ron:

And one of the real stains on American history. There are many, but the internment of Japanese citizens in concentration camps as a stain. And so people began to think, Oh well maybe this is possible. And so the first bill was kind of modeled after the bill for reparations for Japanese, but it was to create a study to study slavery and whether or not the damages warranted reparations. And we embraced it because we saw it as an educational tool, an organizing tool. And it was reintroduced every year, HR 40, which is 40 acres and a mule. That's sort of the idea from 1989 to the present, so every year it was reintroduced and sometimes we got up to maybe 50 sponsors. Other times it was very few, but it has never gotten out of committee. Now one of the points we made is that through a collective effort of the folks working with the national African-American reparations commission and because of our interface with the movement for black lives, we created a task force that actually rewrote the bill so that the bill that is now being sponsored by Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee is a bill that will not just study whether reparations are warranted.

Ron:

It is a bill to study reparations proposals for African Americans and it includes the language from the United Nations that a Marbre mentioned earlier. That

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language, we put that language in the bill, so it's an entirely different bill and what we now see is it has now more than 120 sponsors more than ever before in the house of representatives. It also, there's a companion bill in the Senate. It was introduced by Cory Booker that has sponsors as well. Now it is also endorsed by speaker Pelosi, Senate minority leader, Chuck Schumer. So this bill is going to pass when it's introduced, it will pass and on Juneteenth and we help to orchestrate that. There was a historical congressional hearing and I gotta tell you I was there for, it was unbelievable, but they have never seen anything like that on Capitol Hill. We were just in the one hearing room.

Ron:

They had to open up, I think it was five different overflow rooms. Almost a thousand people were on Capitol Hill on that day. Beyond that, there are a number, first of all, presidential candidates are talking about it. There was a recent debate. It keeps coming up, whoever, I mean [inaudible] people tripping over themselves to say at least I support HR 40 others are saying, if I'm elected president I will sign it. I mean, so they're on record and so this bill is going to be introduced. It will pass, but it's also an incredible educational tool as we move forward. So the ACLU has joined this struggle and is working with the national African-American reparations commission. We now have also in this core group movement for black lives is represented in it as well as we're doing this educational forums around the country. It like there's a discussion with human rights watch in terms of being involved in it as well. So HR 40 is a critical part of the reparations movement, not only here but we also learned that it is carefully being watched throughout the world. So HR 40 is very powerful in that regard.

Donita:

I see. That is outstanding. Thank you. So the New York times 1619 project was welcomed with fanfare and received criticism when it was published in August. A

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number of school districts including Chicago and a handful of schools across the country have adopted the curriculum. What role do you hope the 1619 project will play in future conversations about reparations.

Marbre:

I think that Dr Daniels mentioned this, this country has a long history of amnesia when it comes to both the actual concepts of the genocide. That was kind of like slave trade and then slavery, but also of the intricacies that I was in Germany, literally every single bridge in which there was a labor that was forced by the Jewish population, there is a plaque that names that and every house in which I'm somebody was sent to a concentration camp and killed. There was a plaque that names that history, that names that pain. And we live in a country where literally though still monuments to genocidal killers throughout the South. And so we really have never reckoned with either the occurrences or the legacy of slavery in this country. And so I think welcome any attempts to do that to the point of not just naming actual holes of chattel slavery, but also naming the lasting impacts of those holes, whether it be an intergenerational trauma. I think we're just now [inaudible], right? In terms of how our brains work and how generations of enslavement and torture impact families and individuals. And so I think really welcome any attempts that, any educational projects that do a deep dive that say actually we've not a backend with this history.

Marbre:

And not only reckoned with the holes of this history, but also with the impact. And so every single institution, every church, every philanthropic organization, every school, every old college, whether it's Georgetown or Harvard, all of these institutions were built on the wealth that was gone on and exploited from black labor in this country and the theft of indigenous land. And so I think for us to be real at the stock market, all of that, if you are so important for us to name that and to study that history. And the

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reality is, I mean, as I mentioned, one of the requirements of a reparations from the UN is this satisfaction. This acknowledgement of the harms that have been done in other countries, whether it is Germany, whether it is South Africa, whether it is Rawanda has done a much better job of actually acknowledging those harms.

Marbre:

And so I think even the pushback from conservatives to this project, I think is just an indication how scared people are to actually talk about the history and the legacy of slavery in this country. And the reality is that not only was it a horrific genocidal project that led to the wealth of many people across the globe and in this country, but it also was a deeply economic project that continues after chattel slavery in the form of racialized capitalism, whether it's sharecropping, whether it is convict leasing and now the prison industrial complex. And so I think it's important that we draw those lines very clearly and that we name that this is the country that was really built on two sins that led to its economic success. One of those was chattel slavery and the other one was the theft of indigenous land. And I think that once we do that, we have to then reckon with what, how do we actually assess those harms and solve them?

Marbre:

And so I think the more that that work is done by and led by black folks, the more authentic and comprehensive they can be. And the least effects it can have in terms of corporations and capitalism on how this story is told the most honest it can be. And so I think there are lots to be said about, and I think that it's a really important education question. And we have a school system that literally had a race. The history of slavery caught up. This demand is a realigning and a reeducation of what actually the impacts have been

Ron:

As well as the 1619 piece. There are HBO problem and there are all kinds of things that we're saying

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what? Well, that's a result of a movement. That's the other thing we want to call out. There is a tremendous, longstanding movement that goes in ebbs and flows, but it is surging at this moment in a way that we've never seen before. And I think it has to do not only with those of us who've been here doing this work for a long time, because we've been doing it for a long time, and if we had known how to do it better, it would have maybe, but there's a whole new thrust of energy. I think Ta-Nehisi Coates and his work, the new Atlantic certainly helped popularize it. And we can't say enough about the movement for black lives and the energy that they put into this, the thinking that they put into it and the underground work that is occurring.

Ron:

But I also think that there's a way in which this current resident in the White House is also contributing. Cause I think there are some folks in the white community who are reacting to just the ugliness, the lack of civility and just the, I mean there are so many isms to describe it. So I think there's also a way of people saying, you know, if this country is going to be what Martin Luther King, you know, he talked about this dream and the whole notion of a more perfect union. And you know, I kind of fall into that a little bit of too, I'm, I'm, I'm interested in this more PR, but it must be one which deals squarely with addressing this history and repairing the system, which is going to be a long-term project. But what it means is that this nation has the potentially to be what it has never really become as Langston Hughes once they had a real demonstration of how human beings can live, you know, with decency and with democracy, real democracy, economic democracy, not just political democracy and become a real beacon, not in an arrogant sense by example.

Ron:

So all of those things that seems to be are incredibly important, but the movement, people should never forget that these things occur. They don't drop out of

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the sky. They occur because of movement. So the New York times and other entities are reacting to that. And I would also say the other thing that's important is there are people up inside of these institutions. You're one of the things I, one of my dear friends, Dr. James Turner, Africana Studies Resource Center at Cornell and a dear friend of mine, he, there's conversations that, that are in blazing into my mind. And one time we were sitting down and he said, you know, Ron, one of the things that's important is we have to have black people who are of the race and for the race. And just say there are a lot of people. That's Charles Baron, when another dear friend of mine, he said a lot of people are cosmetically black but they're not authentically black.

Ron:

So the other thing is inside of these institutions are conscious black people are conscious people of of color or even conscious allies who are now pushing it. But they're pushing it because they've been immersed in the movement or somehow they've been, they've had an epiphany and are moving it. And by the way, let me just say quick here, too, even on a global scale, you know the demand for reparations by Jamaica and some of these countries, they're dependent on these colonial powers. But guess what? Inside of all of these countries is also a diaspora that is becoming the contradiction up inside of these countries. There are now citizens of Britain, they're now citizens of France and they're now building with labor oriented and socialist oriented movements. Contradictions that are now challenging and demanding. So this is, this is really a very, very, very exciting period to be living.

Ron:

You know, to see this coming to fruition now it's, it won't be in my lifetime, you know, but that's okay. King said it doesn't matter. You know, because our people collectively down the line are going to see repair and that repair as Marbre has laid out so eloquently. It's not just the immediate awarding of reparation. King said, and we're in this season, he said,

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"True compassion is more than flinging a coin at a beggar. It comes to understand that the edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring." And so really what this is about is creating a new edifice.

Marbre:

So I think that at its heart, reparations is about a restructuring, that it's about an acknowledgement that because of the harms of history globally and in this country, there has been an accumulation of wealth and power in the hands very often of those who have inflicted those harms. And so I think this idea of not just a check that's cut or tweaking of systems or an apology that's made but actually reparations, but how do we assess the full impacts of those harms and actually address them. And guarantee, they won't happen again. And I think [inaudible] for law for black lives with the organizations that I am part of, we're abolitionists, right? And we believe that these harms are actually inevitable under a system of racialized capitalism with the prison-industrial complex. And it actually - in actuality. If we want to end and cease these harms, we have to transform not just white hegemony also, which does capitalism, the structures that allow for that, the global economic systems that incentivize the harm and oppression of some for the benefit of others.

Marbre:

And so I think this idea too, if reparations is really a clarion call, not just for a single demand in this country, but it's also a framework for understanding how we actually make change in ways that enable equity that allows for [inaudible] of all people, that allows for acknowledgement of mistakes that were made. And so not to recreate those mistakes, but just want to kind of amen said, yeah, this is actually about transformation. It's better to be allocation of power. And to the point that was made by Dr. Daniels and it's in the platform, there also has to be democratic structures. And this goes to DuBois that allow for and create that type of democracy. So how do we actually engage, make sure that those who are most impacted

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by these harms are making decisions about how money is allocated. We don't recreate the same power structures and the same patriarchy structures and the same gender and racial and class structures. [inaudible] Actual new democratic structures that allow us to think about what period of justice to think about reparations in a way that actually creates something new and doesn't just recreate our past harms.

Donita: Okay, thank you. Demands for reparations is not new. As you know, the first demands for reparations were made by formerly enslaved people before the civil war. Almost 160 years later, we are still trying to convince lawmakers to right this wrong. How do you stay committed to this struggle and what words of encouragement can you share with your listeners to remain encouraged in this fight for reparations?

Ron: Well for me as far as simple and I think about this all the time because I am, I see myself as being in communion with those ancestors. We recently took a tour - the National African-American Reparations Commission sent a team to Evanston, Illinois, where by the way is where Northwestern University is, this liberal institution. And it's very ironic that it's often, and you know it's up South, but when you look at the history of what happened, it didn't matter.

Ron: It was like you might as well have been so-called down South. But when we were going through those communities and we were listening to people who talked about their upbringing, you know, Dr. Ira Caruthers was born in that community and Lionel Jean-Baptiste a Haitian - the Haitian community that developed and others who talked about their parents and what they did and what they struggle to create and how it was taken away from them, how they were robbed of it. Well, I'm an emotive person. I mean I'm in the head, but I feel that when I go to Selma, Alabama for the Bridge Crossing Jubilee, I do that. To keep that

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communion with my ancestors and my own history. My father took us to a tree where an ancestor was lynched. A grandfather who was born in Mutual Aid Cemetery. You know, Mutual Aid Cemetery comes out of the whole effort of people who created these black institutions, mutual aid societies, that whole history.

Ron:

And so for me it is about how to continue to remind ourselves about that but also to struggle to achieve repair. Because to me, if I don't do that, I am betraying really my, the fact that I'm standing on the legacy of, of that struggle and there is a need to continue that struggle. So that's, I sustain it. For me, that's where I think rituals and ceremonies are also important, not just in and of themselves and by themselves, but there are a way of reminding us, encouraging us, you know, so that we can continue to engage the struggle and you know, and I think that people can contribute. Not everybody will contribute at the level of insane work that I do. I mean, it's like this multitasking and so forth and so on. But everybody ought to contribute in some way. And let me just say that it was interesting. I think Marbre mentioned in an earlier piece that there was a commemoration held on the day of Queen Mother Audley Moore's birthday. Well, Queen Mom, I was mentored by Queen Mother Moore. She had adopted me as her son, as a son, one of her sons, you know, and she taught me about reparations and so forth. And so it's people like her and you just think of the many, many, many, many people who have struggled and have contributed, then, you know, I don't think I have anything other than an obligation to do this work.

Marbre:

Yeah, yeah, I agree. I think that we have a righteous fight, and it's a fight that's been carried on and held by and informed by and killed by our ancestors. And so I think that's a source of inspiration and a constant pushing that this is a mandate in some basic ways. I also, I mean, I just, I think we've won, like we've won so much and I think that as [inaudible], were in a moment of resurgence and of power to the movement

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is strong. And then, you know, as you mentioned, Belinda 20 years before slavery ended made the false claim collaboration. So one of them and she find, and we see continuous fights and now we haven't reached the promised land. We haven't gotten the full victory but open over again, our people fight and they win. And so I think looking at our history, whether it's what's happening in Evanston right now, the Chicago victory with the Burge torture cases, the Tuskegee victory, which is litigation victory, CARICOM, the fights that folks are waging and the battles that we have won are an important thing to look to,

Marbre:

This is not a hopeless fight. That it's a fight that our people have waged righteously and have in some cases won them. And we haven't won. We've gone from not winning and we continue the fight. I also think won a really important moment. And so I think both as as Dr. Daniels said, we have this resurgence of movement for the first time in my lifetime. And I think, and in many people's lifetime we have president candidates talking about reparations, even if they don't have it 100%, right. We're going to help them. I'm pushing to not maybe bonds just to call out. But the reality is that because of movement, because of the great people, many of them, black, queer young folks put their bodies in the streets and focus. And because of the endless work of Dr. Daniels and others of generations of work, we'll at a really unique moment.

Marbre:

And I think that the other thing about this moment is the decriminalization of marijuana that's happening across the country. And so as we talked about, one of the badges and incidences of slavery is the war on drugs. It's a continuation. It's no coincidence that it was under Nixon and the post civil rights movement that we see the declaration of a war on black people as Tupac would say. And then the incarceration of hundreds of thousands of black folks. And now on this one, as we're saying to decriminalize and legalize

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marijuana and it is white men predominantly who are benefiting from that making millions of dollars, billions in this industry that is excluded that how could he use to exclude black and Brown people, but especially black people that doesn't have a limit of what does the relations mean for the war on drugs as we legalize cannabis, what does it look like to have reparations

Marbre:

What does it look like to actually repair the lives of the millions of folks who've been harmed by the war on drugs? And so I think the work that's happening in, in Chicago, the fights here in New York City for equity inside of these bills and to demand reparations framework is part of the movement work that that is possible. And so I just feel really excited by that. And I think people are fighting tirelessly, folks who spent time in cages, folks who are directly impacted by these systems are now demanding a reckoning of those systems. And our reckoning of the harm. We cannot just erase and bandage over this most recent iteration of white supremacy in our policies that we have to actually reckon with it and so I feel really hopeful right now I think that all is possible through movement and we're seeing an intensification of movement of the people who have been most impacted, which I think is how we win and so between the ancestors behind us and the young people who are in the streets and in the corridors of power in the Capitol in front of us, I have no doubt that we're going to win this.

Donita:

Thank you. This has been an important and emotional topic, so it was important to end on this hopeful note. Thank you, Ron, and Marbre for sharing your knowledge and perspective with our listeners. We will have all the resources that you've mentioned certainly on The Activist Files website, certainly the movement for black lives tool toolkit, a reparations toolkit. We will be happy to post that and any other materials that you think that would be helpful for our listeners to really understand of this important topic. So thank you very much. This has really been an education for me. I

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read *The Debt* many, many years ago. I was just thought it was the best book I'd ever read in my life at that time. And so thank you for bringing it all together again.

Marbre:

Thank you so much for the opportunity.